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ASSESSING EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTION OF DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR AND THEIR SILENCE

Dr. Assegid Demissie Shishigu^{*1}, Eniye Dargie², Sewunet Aychillie

¹Assoc Prof, Dept. of Management, University of Gondar, Ethiopia.

²Lecturer, , Dep. of Accounting, University of Gondar, Ethiopia.

³Lecturer, Dept. of Management University of Gondar, , Ethiopia.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to assess the relationship between destructive leadership behaviors of manager and employees silence in the nine government offices in the three zones of Amhara national Regional State. A total of 300 samples, 35 from each sector were planned to select randomly. We able to administered 230 questionnaires. But only 91 useable questionnaires were able to collect. To measure the extent of employees' perception of destructive leadership behaviors and their silences, two instruments adapted from standard research instruments used by other previous researchers. Data is analyzed by means of descriptive statistics, correlations and regression analysis. The main findings of this study show that a significant number of employees (59%) perceived destructive leadership behaviors in their organization. Most employees (60%) prefer to be silent in the organization. But only 9% variance of the current level of employees' silence is accounted for the manifestation of Destructive leadership.

Keywords: Destructive, Destructive leadership, silence, Employees silence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sometimes employees speak up and many times, they prefer to be silent and feel reluctant to raise issues rather than voice their concerns to their organizations. This withholding of information behavior of employees undermines organizational decision making and error-correction (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Tamuz, 2001).

Many employees are concerned about their organization activities, but are afraid to speak to their bosses about their concerns. They are often reluctant to share information that could be interpreted as negative (Ryan & Oestreich, 1991). The cultures of intimidation or destructive leadership might lead employees' feel not confident enough to raise these issues (Oppel, 2002).

The manifestation and reasons of employees' silence has been studied by many researchers such as (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Tamuz, 2001), and the effects of destructive leadership behaviors on different human resource management problems are extensively assessed. For example, according to American Society for Training and Development, (1999), After 20 years of research and 60,000 exit interviews, the Saratoga Institute reports that 80% of

turnover is directly related to unsatisfactory relationships with one's boss. And a recent Gallup Organization study of approximately 2 million workers at 700 companies, the number one reason people leave their jobs is because of bad leaders. But few or none studies are conducted on the relationship between destructive leadership and employees' silence.

Thus, we felt that it is most appropriate to conduct study in which participants share their perception of their organizations leaders' manifestation of destructive leadership behavior and assess its effect on employees' decision to remain silent about their concerns related to issues and problems at work in the their organization.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to assess the effect of destructive leadership behaviors of top and middle level managers on employees' silence

Specific objectives:

1. To identify the extent of employees' perception of leaders' destructive leadership behaviors
2. To assess the extent of employees' reluctant to speak in the organization
3. To identify the effect of destructive leadership behaviors on employees silence
4. To identify the type and range of issues and concerns most likely to elicit silence.
5. To assess the effect of demographic variables on employees silence.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. Research design

The study is design to conduct a descriptive survey. The subjects of the study are employees and lower manager (supervisors) of zonal level public sectors, (Education, Health and Agriculture) in the three zones i.e. North Gondar, South Gondar, and Bahir Dar.

3.2. Population and Sample

Population size

The target population of the study is **738** employees, of the three public agencies in the three zones.

Sample size

The sample size of the study was 300 participants found to be representative of the target population one hundred from each zone. The sample is proportionally distributed to the three zonal public offices based on their total employee size. From each public office 30-40 respondents are selected randomly. At the end, only 91 useable questionnaires were able to be collected.

3.3. Study Instruments

Questionnaire method is being used in this research to identify the *destructive leadership behavior*, and *employees' silence*. The instrument was divided into three areas: a) Demographic data, b) characteristics of destructive leadership behavior and c) employees

silence in the organization. Likert 5 Point Rating Scale, ranging from 1= *strongly disagree* to 5 for *strongly agree*, is used for rating by the respondents. But for analysis simplifications *strongly disagree* and *disagree* are and also *strongly agree* and *agree* and combined.

3.3.1. Measuring Destructive leadership

To measure the destructive leadership behavior of leaders, questionnaire is developed by adapting the instruments used by research scholars like (Kellerman, B., 2004; and S. Einarsen *et al.*, 2007). The instrument used in this study has 17 items.

Each of the dimensions has the following number of questions: (Machiavelli leadership, 4; Abusive leadership, 5; narcissistic leadership, 3; and Authoritarian behavior, 5). The *Validity Test* of the instrument is conducted by means of Factor Analysis. All the 17 items are factor analyzed with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences release 16. Principal components analysis of the test reveals the presence of 7 components with Eigen values exceeding 1.00 which are obtained using the Varimax Rotation Algorithm has cumulative percentage of 69.7 percent. *Reliability the test* of the instrument designed to measure destructive leadership is conducted by means of Cronbach's Alpha and the result is found to be.

3.3.2. Measuring Employees' silence

To measure the extent of *employees' silence*, research instrument is adapted from the instrument developed by Morrison & Milliken (2003). This instrument has 14 items. Likert 5 Point Rating Scale, ranging from 1=*not at all*, 5= *always* is used. The **validity** of the instrument is tested by means of Factor Analysis. All 14 items were factor analyzed. The Principal components analysis reveals the presence of 5 components with Eigen values greater than 1.00 which were obtained using the Varimax Rotation Algorithm has commutative percentage of 59.7 percent. The **Reliability test** of the *employees' silence* instrument is conducted by means of Cronbach's Alpha, and the result of the test shows .694. Therefore, both instruments used to measure both variables are above the cut point, 0.5 for Factor analysis, and 0.6 for reliability test.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1. Destructive leadership

Leadership behavior that violates the rightful and lawful, justifiable and interests of the organization or the employees are destructive (Sackett & DeVore, 2001). Destructive leadership is a repeated and systematic behavior of a manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organization and employees. Destructive leadership undermines and sabotages the goals, tasks, resources, and the effectiveness, of the organization, and as well as, the motivation, well-being or satisfaction of employees (Ståle, Einarsen, *et al.*, 2007). Destructive leadership is behavior that is intended to cause harm, as a result of thoughtlessness, insensitivity, or lack of competence (Ma, Karri, & Chittipeddi, 2004).

Destructive leadership behaviors have two dimensions, one directed toward **subordinates** and the other behaviors directed toward the **organization**. Destructive actions directed towards the organization are such as, working on goals other than those

defined by the organization, (Lipman-Blumen's, 2005), and destructive actions that is targeted at subordinates, are behaviors, such as, "abusive" (Tepper, 2000). A supervisor may fail to protect the welfare of subordinates, in a working environment or may fail to provide the subordinates with valuable information or feedback (Neuman and Baron, 2005).

According to Einarsen, S. et al. (2007), leaders may act destructively on one dimension while behaving constructively on the other. A leader who act in accordance with the goals of the organization may still harasses subordinates. A manager who acts against to the legitimate goals of the organization may be supportive towards the interest of subordinates (ibid).

The study conducted by Lombardo & McCall, (1984) found that among 73 managers, 74% of them had experienced intolerable or destructive behaviors. Namie & Namie (2000) also found that 89% of those experiencing bullying at work perceived leaders as the main destructive. Studies like these clearly document that leaders may actively behave in a destructive manner towards subordinates. Sabotage, corruption, and theft behaviors among managers have been also documented (Keller man, 2004; Lipman-Blumen, 2005).

Dimensions of Destructive Leadership

In this study, destructive leadership behavior is treated in terms of (*Machiavellian, Abusive, Narcissism, and Authoritarian*).

Machiavellian leadership behavior: This bad behavior of leader is adapted from Nicolo Machiavelli, book, "Prince" (1523). According to Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa (1979), Machiavellian manager always wears a mask; He does not show his true self. He acts against his promise; he protects himself, and strives to make everyone recognize him in his action greatness. Machiavellian leader believes to be feared is much safer than loved (Ibid).

Abusive Leadership behavior: According to Tepper, (2000) abusive leadership is the hostile verbal and nonverbal behavior of supervisors. It does not include physical abuse. Destructive leader forced to act abusively in order to achieve some other goal. The abusive leader exercises power to serve his own self interest by dominating to achieve what he wants. To gain his purposes, he manipulates others. As Baron and Neuman, (1998) noted abusive leader wants to win at any cost.

Narcissistic Leadership Behavior: Narcissistic is a person who requires excessive admiration, has a grandiose sense of self-importance, and is ignorant (Judge, Timphy, A., and Robins, 2007). Narcissist likes to be the center of attention. He likes look at himself in the mirror a lot. He extravagant dreams and seems to consider himself a person of many talents (ibid). According to Fischman & Ortiz, (2002b), narcissism in the organization manifests of in the form of focusing on lowering the others by being aggressive, and directed towards getting power through the manipulation of relations with other people.

Authoritarian Leadership Behavior: Authoritarian is a leader's destructive behavior that asserts absolute authority and control over subordinates and demands unquestionable obedience from subordinates (Blake, Robert R. & Mouton, Janse S., 1985). Authoritarian has

little or no allowance for cooperation or collaboration. He expects people to do what they are told without question or debate. When something goes wrong he tends to focus on who is to blame rather than concentrate on exactly what is wrong and how to prevent it. Authoritarian leader is intolerant of what he sees as dissent (ibid).

4.2. Employee Silence

Employees' silence is the withholding of employees' genuine concern about circumstances in their organization (Pinder, Craig C. Karen P. Harlos, 2001); According to Çakıcı, Ayşehan, (2007), Silence is intentionally withholding information on issues related to the job or workplace.

Employees often have ideas, information, and opinions to improve work in organizations. Sometimes employees exercise speak up and voice their ideas, concern, information, and opinions; and other times they engage in withhold their ideas, information, and opinions (Botero Isabel C. et.al, 2003).

Employees' silence can be either Acquiescent (disengaged behavior based on resignation) or Defensive (self-protective behavior based on fear) or Pro-Social motives (i.e., silence that is proactive and other-oriented, based on altruism and cooperation) (Morrison and Milliken, 2000). *These* aspects of employees' silence:

Acquiescent Silence is a silence of employees when they are aware of available alternatives (options) to change or improve the situation in the organization, but they feel reluctance to speak up (Pinder, Craig C. Karen P. Harlos, 2001). Their silence means they are resigned to the current situation and are unwillingness to speak up, to engage, or to attempt changing the situation, or believe that they do not make a difference, and they disengage and do not contribute ideas or suggestions to the organization (Ibid).

Acquiescent silence may also mean employees' submission or deeply felt acceptance of organizational circumstances and reflects "a taken-for-granted" notion of the situation and limited awareness of the existence of other alternatives (ibid). It is also mean intentionally passive behavior (Botero Isabel C. et.al, 2003).

Defensive Silence is proactive and intentional behavior of withholding relevant information, ideas, or opinions, because of fear and for the sake of self-protection from external threats (Schlenker, Barry R. Weigold, Michael. F. 1989). According to Pinder, Craig C. Karen P. Harlos, (2001), it is a conscious decision to withhold ideas, information and opinions. Defensive silence is deliberate withholding opinion or information, because of personal fear of the consequences of speaking up (ibid). Athanassiades (1973) suggests that silence is a form of instrumental, self-protective behavior. Employees most likely filter information that they convey upward, when they lack trust in their supervisor (Roberts & O'Reilly, 1974).

Employees may withhold information in order to not "rock the boat" or create conflict with superiors, because superiors are often intolerant of criticism and dissent (Sprague & Ruud, 1988). Saunders, et.al, (1992), also argues that employees' willingness to speak up work-

related concerns and suggestions to their superiors depended on how approachable and responsive they perceived their supervisors to be. According to Ashford et al., (1998), perceived Organizational support, the quality of one's relationship with senior people, and norms leads employees to be silence.

Pro-social Silence: According to, Botero Isabel C. et.al, (2003), Pro-Social Silence is the conscious decision to withhold information, and suggestions based on full awareness and consideration of other alternatives. It is employees' withholding work-related opinion information, with the objective of benefiting other people or the organization. It is a silence motive intended to protect the organization and another individual (Brinsfield, Chad, 2009).

4.3. Destructive Leadership and Employees Silence

There are various reasons, why people in organizations make the decision to be silent (Morrison and Milliken (2003). One reason may be the "mum effect", people have a reluctance behavior to convey negative information because of the discomfort associated with being the conveyer of bad news (Rosen & Tesser, 1970). Powerful norms and defensive routines within organizations often make employees to be silence what they know (Argyris, 1977). Lack of experience or working in lower levels affecting employee silence (Milliken et al, 2003); organizational norms (Bowen and Blackmon, 2003); non-existence of a participative organization culture (Huang et al, 2005); and hierarchical structuring and lack of feedback (Morrison and Milliken, 2000), are some of the organizational factors causing employee silence.

Despite the numerous researches mentioned above and others factors suggested that leads employees often feel uncomfortable raising issues, problems and concerns to their superiors, there is much that we do not know about why people often remain silent.

Therefore, this study is conducted to find out the relationship between destructive leadership behavior and employees' silence.

5. RESULT AND DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 descriptive analyses

As Table 1, below reveals the information obtained from the data analysis shows that 54(59%) of respondents confirm their perception of the distractive leadership behavior of the organization leaders. The other 22(25 %) do not dare to voice their perception, while the remaining 14(16%) respond as they do not perceive is no any destructive behavior in their leaders. Even when we see the extent of perception among the dimensions of destructive leadership behavior 57-63 percent of the respondents are agreed.

Regarding employees' silence, 54 (60%) of the respondents withhold their concerns, or prefer to be silent. only 14% of them are trying to voice their concern.

From this study we can understand that many of leaders of the subject government organizations are perceived as experience destructive leadership behaviors and most employees are withholding information, issues or their concerns.

Table 1: frequency distribution of Destructive leadership behavior and Employees; Silence

	Machiavellian leadership		Abusive Leadership		Narcissistic Leader		Authoritarian Leadership		Destructive leadership	
	f	%	f	%	f	f	%	f	%	f
Disagree	15	17	11	12	14	15	17	11	12	14
Neutral	21	23	30	33	20	21	23	30	33	20
Agree	55	60	50	55	57	55	60	50	55	57
	Acquiescent Silence		Defensive Silence		Pro-social Silence		Employees Silence			
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Disagree	12	13	12	13	14	16	13	24		
Neutral	23	26	26	29	23	25	24	26		
Agree	56	62	53	58	54	59	54	60		

5.2 Correlation analysis

As shown in Table 2, Destructive leadership has positive and statistically significant relationship with employees silence ($r=.314$), Pro-social Silence ($r=.368$) at ($p<0.01$).), but has not significantly correlated with Acquiescent Silence and Defensive Silence. On the other hand the dimensions of destructive leadership behavior i.e Abusive Leadership ($r=.214$) at ($p < .05$).

The results in the table also reveal that the relationship with dimensions of destructive leadership behavior, Narcissistic Leader ($r=.316$) with employees silence and ($r=.378$) at ($p<0.01$), level with Pro-social Silence. Authoritarian Leadership ($r=.296$) at ($p<0.01$) with employees silence, Defensive Silence ($r=.267$) at ($p<0.05$) and with Pro-social Silence ($r=.299$) at ($p<0.01$), But Machiavellian leadership does not have significant relationship with employees silence and its dimensions.

Table 2: Correlation between destructive leadership behavior and employees silence variable

	Employees silence	Acquiescent Silence	Defensive Silence	Pro-social Silence
Destructive leadership	.314**	.143	.207	.368**
Machiavellian leadership	.114	.121	-.052	.182
Abusive Leadership	.214*	.088	.163	.239*
Narcissistic Leadership	.316**	.157	.198	.378**
Authoritarian Leadership	.296**	.124	.267*	.299**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

5.3 Variance explained in employees silence by destructive leadership

Results of the regression analysis in Table 3 show that ($R^2 = .099$, adjusted $R^2 = .089$) at $P < .003$. That is, only 9 percent variance of the current level of employees' silence is accounted for the manifestation of Destructive leadership. The stepwise algorithm chooses Narcissistic Leadership (in terms of Destructive leadership variables) .The result of the *Beta analysis* in

Table 3 also reveals that Narcissistic Leadership behavior, emerged as the first significant predictor ($\beta = .302$, $P < .004$),

Table 3: regression Analysis and beta Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Sig.
1	.314 ^a	.099	.089	.003 ^a

Coefficients of the beta Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Narcissistic Leadership	.183	.062	.302	2.959	.004

a. Predictors: (Constant), Destructive leadership; b. Dependent Variable: employees' silence

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that most employees are reluctant to speak, or voice their concern and opinion in the work place. All type of silences, that is, Acquiescent silence, defensive silence, and pro-social silences are practiced.

On the other hand, employees perceived the manifestation of destructive leadership behavior in their organization. Even though there is a significant relationships between destructive leadership behavior and employees' silence, the extent of influence exert on employees' withholdings of information is minimum.

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